

E. E. Boynton House
16 East Boulevard
Rochester
Monroe County
New York

HABS No. NY-5655

HABS
NY,
28 ROCH,
29-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. NY-5655

E. E. BOYNTON HOUSE

NY,
28-ROCH, 29

Location: 16 East Boulevard, on the east side of the street, the second house from the corner of East Boulevard and Park Avenue, Rochester, Monroe County, New York

Present Owner and Occupant: Mrs. David Tinling

Present Use: Private residence

Statement of Significance: This well-preserved typical example of Frank Lloyd Wright's famous prairie house is unique in its completeness of an interior room. The dining room perhaps summarizes the architect's rather radical concept of interior space in 1908.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1908, building permit granted May 15, 1908.
2. Architect: Frank Lloyd Wright.
3. Original and subsequent owners: "... parts of lots eight and nine, in the Cornelia C. E. Smith tract ..."

1907 Deed, May 13, 1907, Book 753, p. 198.
From: Percy R. McPhail and S. Belle, his wife.
To: Edward Everett Boynton.

1919 Deed, June 1, 1919, Book 1062, p. 211.
From: Edward Everett Boynton.
To: J. Oswald Daily of Brockport.
The property has restrictions as recorded in Book 711, p. 304, stating land use frontage, minimum cost, occupancy and setback. These were part of the deed when Boynton purchased the property.

1921 Deed, April 13, 1921, Book 1119, p. 182.
From: J. Oswald Daily.
To: Florence C. Daily.

1922 Deed, June 13, 1922, Book 1164, p. 446.
From: Florence Daily.
To: Harry B. Guilford.

- 1925 Deed, October 19, 1925, Book 1340, p. 545.
From: Harry B. Guilford and Mary E., his wife.
To: Francis M. Dailey.
Subject to an \$18,000.00 mortgage held by the Rochester Trust and Safe Deposit Company, July 1, 1925.
- 1925 Deed, October 19, 1925, Book 1342, p. 254.
From: Francis M. Dailey.
To: Elizabeth J. Burns, Hotel Roosevelt, New York City.
The \$18,000.00 mortgage was assumed.
- 1942 Deed, September 1, 1942, Book 2096, p. 254.
From: Elizabeth J. Burns.
To: The Rochester Trust and Safe Deposit Company.
- 1943 Deed, October 7, 1943, Book 2153, p. 397.
From: The Rochester Trust and Safe Deposit Company.
To: Arlene E. Howard.
The purchaser assumed the mortgage.
- 1968 The structure was purchased by Dr. David C. Tinling after March 22, 1968. The Society for the Preservation of Landmarks in Western New York, Inc. received an easement on the property to insure against demolition, exterior alteration, and construction of additional structure or signs.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The building permit lists Boynton as "builder-owner." Gorsline and Swan of Rochester were the contractors.
5. Original plan and construction: The following are the listing of the original drawings held by the Taliesen Foundation, Scottsdale, Arizona. Blueprints of these are on file at the Society for the Preservation of Landmarks in Western New York.
- a. Basement plan, lighting plan.
 - b. First floor plan
 - c. Second floor plan.
 - d. South elevation with footings. North elevation with footings.
 - e. East elevation, west elevation, both with footings, longitudinal section with footings, elevation of door.

- f. Plan of window mullions; elevation of long windows on staircase; window frames, plaster jams; typical wall section; details of basement frames and basement mullion; cross section of house; rear elevation of fireplace; basement partition; kitchen cases; living room elevation of fireplace; pitch of roof.

The building permit, #10988, lists a two story frame and plaster dwelling, 54' x 115', valuation, \$10,000.00.

6. Alterations and additions: January 6, 1925, building permit #78522 allowed for enclosing of a porch, valuation \$1,500.00. C. C. Burns, husband of the owner, was issued the permit.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Edward Boynton was a very successful salesman and later partner in the Ham Lantern Company of Rochester. He first heard of Wright through Warren MacArthur, a business partner in the lantern company. Wright had built one of his earliest houses for MacArthur in the Kenwood district of Chicago in 1892. The Boyntons, Edward and his daughter, Beulah, selected Wright as the architect of their home after giving brief consideration to the work of Claude Bragdon, Rochester's leading modern architect. Wright participated in the choice of the site and insisted on the expensive addition of twenty-eight elm trees. Actually, Wright closely supervised the construction of the Boynton House. During the year in which it was built, Wright frequently and unexpectedly arrived at the site. Once there, he would never leave the house during his stay which often lasted two or three days. Generally speaking, the Boyntons were some of Wright's more affluent clients. The total cost of the house including the lot was \$55,000 in 1908. But perhaps the most significant aspect of the architect-client relationship was the layman expertise and interest exhibited by Beulah Boynton, for whom her father built the house. Some of her design suggestions were incorporated into the structure and furniture by Wright, including the adjustable backs of the Wright-designed dining and lounge chairs. Like his other client of the same year, Mrs. Avery Coonley of Riverside, Illinois, Beulah Boynton seems to have established a certain rapport with Wright which is reflected in the direct supervision which the structure received. Beulah Boynton and her husband of 1908 lived in the house until 1918 when they moved to New York. When Wright visited the house in c. 1930, he seemed upset to discover that the house he had designed for a spacious

rural setting had been encroached upon by nearly adjacent dwellings.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: Interior views showing Wright furniture, collection of Mrs. B. L. Boynton, New York City. Six sheets of original drawings, Taliesen Foundation, Scottsdale, Arizona.
2. Bibliography:
 - a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Building permits, Building Bureau, Public Safety Building.

Deeds, Office of Monroe County Clerk.
 - b. Secondary and published sources:

Brooks, H. Allen. The Prairie School. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972.

Eaton, Leonard K. Two Chicago Architects and Their Clients. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969.

Hitchcock, Henry-Russell. In the Nature of Materials: The Buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright. New York: Duell, Sloan, Pearce, Inc., 1942.

Rochester Times-Union, April 11, 1955.
3. Likely sources not yet investigated: Boynton family papers.

Prepared by Kevin Patrick Harrington
Society For the Pre-
servation of Land-
marks in Western New
York
December 6, 1966

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The massing of this Wright prairie house is longitudinal and complex, composed

of volumetric rectilinear blocks set at right angles. The extended, low hipped roofs hover over long horizontal bands of windows.

2. Condition of fabric: The structure has been maintained reasonably well. There is some cracking in the stucco due to settling and evidence of patching. The wood trim is in good condition with the exception of the water table boards which are cracked and rotted at the northwest corner.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: One hundred and eighteen feet, three and one half inches by fifty-two feet, ten inches; two stories; longitudinal plan with minor central cross axis formed by stair tower to the north and dining room to the south.
2. Foundations: Rubblestone foundation walls are in good condition, approximately four feet, six inches in height and eighteen inches thick. Original outside foundation walls are heightened eight inches by the addition of concrete block. Studs are cut and re-bridged on top of the block. Water table is constructed of butt-jointed boards with lower board battered outward.
3. Wall construction: The stucco covering of the wood frame is slightly textured, and was originally cream in color. The wood trim is dark brown. The exterior is banded by two inch by two inch wood belt courses, continuous at the second story and broken in the first story. Belt course boards are butt-jointed and separated from the wall surface by one inch spacer blocks. The top of the belt course board is flush with the top of the window sill.
4. Structural system, framing: The wood frame consists of two inch by six inch studs. There are two inch by ten inch joists at the first floor where visible under the kitchen. Cathedral ceilings of the second floor are constructed of two inch by four inch studs hung from two inch by eight inch joists. There are two inch by eight inch rafters in the roof.
5. Chimneys: The large single brick chimney at the center of the house is stuccoed above the roof line.
6. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The main, single panel entrance door located in the center of the north facade is broadly proportioned. The double doors with single panels of glass with lead muntins and clear and tinted glazing open from the fountain room to the now enclosed porch. A single glass paneled door similarly treated opens to the east from the dining room. The servants entrance and back hall doors have single glass panels. All doors and doorways have flat wood trim.
 - b. Windows: The predominantly horizontal fenestration is composed of bands of double casement windows in the living room, library, fountain room and upstairs bedrooms. Bands of single casements are located in the stair hall, dining room clerestory, kitchen, pantry and servants quarters. All casement windows are fitted with interior casement screens. All windows are characterized by lead muntins in rectilinear patterns which combine clear and tinted glazing. Window casings and frames are of flat-sawn wood boards.
7. Roof: The low hipped roofs and flat roof over the dining room bay were covered with asphalt shingles in the 1960's. The periphery of the eave soffit is banded by broad, dark wood trim to the depth of nineteen inches back from the fascia. To the inside of the trim, the soffit is stuccoed as the wall. The gutters are integral to the roof, presently cove shaped, probably the result of modern repairs. Square concrete rain basins are located under the angle of the eaves at the northwest and southwest corners of the house. There is a rectilinear projecting stair hall tower to the north.
 8. Porches, stoops, bulkheads: The major portion of the original terrace porch was converted into a fountain room in 1924, according to designs furnished by Wright. The original eight inch wide porch parapet remains. The north entrance is approached by a broad, three step concrete stoop. An open wood entrance porch to the servants quarters is located at the southeast corner of the house. The five step wood stoop and porch are fitted with modern iron railings.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: The north central hall opens to the living room at the west. The fireplace divides the hall from the living room. At the west end of the living room is located the fountain room, two steps lower than the living room. To the north of the hall, the stair tower accommodates the entrance vestibule, three steps lower than the hall, the stairs to the second floor and the powder room under the stairs. The library adjoins the stair tower to the east. To the south, the hall opens to the dining room which extends south into the bay. The pantry, kitchen and servants quarters extend progressively to the east of the dining room. The servants quarters consist of a bedroom, an adjoining room and bath.
- b. Second floor: The stairs terminate in an upstairs hall. An east-west corridor provides access to the bedrooms. To the west, the corridor ends in the master bedroom. Its bath and dressing room parallel the corridor to the north. The second large bedroom is located to the south side of the corridor, with its accompanying bath and dressing room also parallel to the east-west corridor. The third bedroom adjoins the stair tower to the north. The east end of the corridor opens to a bath on the south and a fourth bedroom to the east.
2. Stairways: The principal stair is a dog-leg, enclosed in the tower. Tall, single casement windows light the landing. A parapet rims the upstairs hall over the stairs. The cellar dog-leg stair has a landing which opens to the east rear door.
3. Flooring: All floors are finished with narrow oak boards except the tiled fountain room and baths. The kitchen floor, originally coved for ease in cleaning, is covered with modern linoleum.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: All walls are painted plaster over lath. There are cathedral ceilings in all except the master suite. All first floor rooms contain a banding line of a one inch by five inch board which runs continuously around the room, one foot, ten inches below the ceiling.
5. Doorways and doors: All doors are single panel fitted with plain trim. The doorways from the hall to the

dining room and living room and from the living to the dining room remain open rectangular arches, the vertical dimension of which is determined by the height of the banding line.

6. Special decorative features: Boxed and grilled radiator covers are located throughout the house. The massive hearth separating the living room from the hall is finished with Roman bricks, twelve inches by four inches by one and a half inches. The low concrete lintel tops the rectangular opening. The fireplace is finished with a projecting concrete base. The living room is fitted with low, glass doored bookcases along the north and south walls, under the windows.

The dining room is complete and as it was in 1908. All the furniture designed by Wright and built locally is in place, including two dining room tables each with a complete set of chairs, sideboard, serving tables, flower stands, side chairs, electric light fixtures, original leaded glass in sideboards and cabinetry. Perhaps the rug was selected by Wright as its color is identical to the glass in some of the windows. The clerestory windows and the indirect lighting fixtures emphasize the three level ceiling: the lowest level above the breakfast or luncheon table which is located in the bay and the upper level at the top of the clerestory windows. A drop ceiling is then extended from the north wall of the dining room almost to the south clerestory windows. The drop ceiling accommodates three leaded glass window panels which are located above the formal dining table with its corner pier lighted flower stands. The entire composition is united with narrow ceiling and upper wall moldings which abut the horizontal banding and casements.

7. Hardware: Protective iron grilles are attached to the inside of the glass paneled doors of the dining room, back hall and servants entrance. Doorknobs and doorhandles, kitchen and pantry drawer pulls, and bookcase knobs are original and Wright-designed. All window hardware and casement latches are original.
8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: The hot water boiler, originally coal fired, has had an oil conversion unit installed.

- b. Lighting: Enclosed recessed lighting is located behind leaded glass panels in the fountain room. Single recessed lights are located behind small tinted glass panels found in the vestibule, upstairs hall and in all corridor ceilings. Original rectangular wall fixtures in brass and oak are extant throughout the house.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The longitudinal axis of the house runs approximately east-southeast by west-northwest. The structure is set at right angles to East Boulevard, with a three hundred foot drive along the north side extending between East Boulevard and Hawthorne Street. The relatively flat lot is located within the City of Rochester's East Avenue Preservation District.
2. Historic landscape design: Some of the original twenty-eight elms still survive. The privacy of this prairie house is further enhanced by rows of shrubbery at the side walk and surrounding the original west porch. Originally a shallow rectilinear pool with center jet was located to the south of the dining room bay. A tennis court on the side lawn was installed at the time of construction.
3. Outbuildings: A separate two-car garage located to the east of the house and flanking the drive on the south is consistent with the design of the house. The low hipped roof with chimney is set on stuccoed walls. Leaded glass windows to the west and south, and in the three-part hinged doors which are hung on overhead tracks, sliding around and parallel to the walls when open, are similar to those in the house.
4. Walks: A walk parallels the driveway on the north side of the house. Beginning at East Boulevard, it terminates at the entrance stoop. Another walk approaches the southeast corner stoop from the driveway.

Prepared by Houghton D. Wetherald
Architecture Worth
Saving
February 16, 1973

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This recording project of twenty-six selections of historical and architecturally significant Rochester structures was undertaken in 1966, by the Society for the Preservation of Landmarks in Western New York, Inc., Mrs. Patrick Harrington, Executive Director, in cooperation with the Historic American Buildings Survey, James C. Massey, Chief. The project was under the general direction of John Poppeliers, Senior Historian. Architectural and historical descriptions were contributed by the Society for the Preservation of Landmarks in Western New York, Inc. General photographic documentation was undertaken by Hans Padelt, Senior Engineer, Graflex, on a contractual basis with the Historic American Buildings Survey. The final documentation and editing was done by Susan R. Slade in 1978, for transmittal to the Library of Congress and the impending publication of the Historic American Buildings Survey New York State catalogue.